of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has recommended that the Minimum Export Price (MEP) should be withdrawn in a phased manner. The matter has been considered and it has been decided that steps have to be initiated for progressive phasing out of the MEP in an appropriate manner particularly for the purpose of making the trade policy measures compatible with World Trade Organisation Rules. Accordingly, the Coir Board has withdrawn MEP from embellishments, powerloom products and geotextiles *with effect from* 11.1.2000.

Small Scale Industries in Assam

1656. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Small Scale Industries set up in the country particularly in the State of Assam as on 31.1.2000;

(b) if so, the details of fund proposed, sanctioned and allotted by Government for the purpose during this period; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to set up Small Scale Industries in Assam during the year 2000-2001?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) There were 24.05 lakh registered small scale industrial units in the country by the end of year 1999 (latest available) including 23,114 units in Assam. Registration data from States are received on quarterly basis.

(b) The details of funds proposed, sanctioned and allotted by the Government for the purpose are as under:

(i) An amount of Rs. 4,304 crore has been provided as the 9th Plan outlay to the Ministry of SSI & ARI for development and promotion of small and cottage industries. During the year 1997-98 and 1998-99, actual expenditure incurred under the plan schemes was Rs. 735.10 crore and Rs. 708.30 crore respectively. The outlay for the year 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 are Rs. 738.75 crore and 920.00 crore respectively. Funds for promotion of small scale industries are not allocated State-wise.

(ii) An outlay of Rs. 174.77 crore was approved for the Village and Small Scale Industry Sector for the 9th Plan of Assam. The outlay for the year 1999-2000 is Rs. 34.98 crore.

(c) While development of small scale industries in the States is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Governments, the Central Government has been helping the States including Assam in their endeavour of SSI development by implementing various schemes such as Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (made liberal for NE states including Assam), Transport Subsidy Scheme (which has been extended upto 31.3.2007 for the North-Eastern States), creation of Integrated Infrastructure Development Centres, Consultancy facilities and services facilities for technological upgradation, entrepreneurship development etc. will continue with the help of institutions like Small Industries Service Institute, Guwahati, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati and Regional Office of the National Small Industries Corporation, Guwahati. These schemes/ programmes would continue for the year 2000-2001 in Assam.

Expansion and development of Small Scale Industries

†1657. SHRI RAGHAVJI: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) what is the year-wise total number of persons who have been provided employment by small and cottage industries during the last three years separated and what was its percentage against the total employment provided by industries;

(b) what steps have been taken by Government during the past one year and are likely to be taken to ensure the expansion and development of these industries in the future; and

(c) what was the total number of units of small, rural and cottage industries in operation all over the country as on 31st December, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The number of persons who have been provided employment in small scale and cottage industries during the last three years are given below:—

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.